

Breast pain

There are many reasons breasts can be painful. It's not usually anything serious, but see a GP if the pain does not improve.

Causes of breast pain

Breast pain is usually linked to periods. Sometimes it can be caused by a health condition or medicine.

Breast pain linked to periods

Breast pain linked to periods usually:

- begins up to 2 weeks before a period, gets worse and then goes away when the period ends
- feels dull, heavy or aching
- affects both breasts and sometimes spreads to the armpit

Other causes of breast pain

Other causes of breast pain include:

- injuries or [sprains](#) to the neck, shoulder or back – these can be felt as breast pain
- medicines like the contraceptive pill and some antidepressants
- conditions like [mastitis](#) or a [breast abscess](#)
- pregnancy
- hormone changes during the [menopause](#)

Breast pain by itself is unlikely to be a symptom of cancer.

Things you can do to ease breast pain

To help ease breast pain:

- take [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#), or rub painkilling gel on your breasts
- wear a properly fitted bra during the day and a soft bra to sleep in

There's little evidence that vitamin E tablets or evening primrose oil help with breast pain.

Non-urgent advice: See a GP about breast pain if:

- it's not improving or painkillers are not helping
- there's a history of breast cancer in your family

- you have any [signs of pregnancy](#) – you could do a [pregnancy test](#) first

Urgent advice: Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111 if:

- you have breast pain and have a very high temperature or feel hot and shivery
- any part of your breast is red, hot or swollen
- there's a hard lump in your breast that does not move around
- you get nipple discharge, which may be streaked with blood
- 1 or both breasts change shape
- the skin on your breast is dimpled (like orange peel)
- you have a rash on or around your nipple, or the nipple has sunk into your breast

These can be signs of something more serious.